

### Requests Time to Work on Solution

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) - U.S. Rep. Mike Coffman (R-Aurora) wants Governor Bill Ritter to veto the legislation, H.B. 1317, that is designed to block the Army from moving forward with its proposal to expand its training areas in southeastern Colorado.

"I'm asking the Governor to veto the bill and give me until the end of the year to work with his office, members of our congressional delegation, the state legislature, the Army, and the impacted community to see if a solution can be worked out," said Coffman.

Coffman gave the Governor a letter this morning explaining his request for a veto. In his letter, Coffman asked the Governor to give him until the end of the year to see if he could find a solution. If not, the legislation could be introduced again next year and the Governor could sign it if he chose to do so. In addition, Coffman explained in his letter that there is no immediate need to act right now because key members of Colorado's congressional delegation have been successful in blocking funding for the Army to conduct an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Without an EIS, the Army will be unable to move forward with their plan.

Coffman met with the commanding general of Fort Carson, Major General Mark Graham, and his staff on Friday to review the training requirements of the Army and their plans to expand the Piñon Canyon Maneuver Site (PCMS). Coffman, a combat veteran with service in both the U.S. Army and the Marine Corps, agreed with the Army's assessment for the need to expand their training area. Coffman is a member of the House Armed Services Committee that has jurisdiction over all matters pertaining to the U.S. military.

"The Army essentially does two things: it trains to go to war and it goes to war. The Army must train to meet current and anticipated threats to the Nation, and it must train as it expects to fight. Unit proficiency and individual readiness save the lives of American soldiers in combat," said Coffman.

House Bill 1317 is designed to block the Army's plans by prohibiting the Colorado State Land Board from selling any sections they own in the proposed expansion area.

In his letter to the Governor, Coffman acknowledged that the Army's initial plan was both poorly conceived and badly presented. He believes that the Army, since then, has made a good faith effort in trying to work with the local ranchers and the impacted communities.

"Unfortunately, every compromise and accommodation the Army has made has been met with unrelenting hostility, accusations of bad faith, and an endless repetition that the Army had failed to justify its requirements," said Coffman.

According to Coffman, the Army has conducted studies where it looked at moving the soldiers and their equipment from Fort Carson to other larger maneuver training areas out of state but the cost was too high. Coffman is concerned that since the Army has concluded that the PMCS is not large enough for the units at Fort Carson to meet their readiness standards that the Army will eventually move the brigade combat teams to another state that can give them the training

areas that they need.

“Our state’s economy is in bad shape. I’m not sure why the members of our legislature would want to put a stick in the eye of a \$1.8 billion a year employer in our state. An employer that is not asking for a bailout but to lease or purchase land from willing sellers at a full market price,” said Coffman.